



on Israel's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

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# A Time for Celebration?

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AS THE STATE of Israel is about to celebrate its 50th anniversary, many people will be asking - what is there to celebrate? Admittedly, that tiny nation at the eastern end of the Mediterranean has made its mark on the world's political scene. We have witnessed the miracle of Israel's economic development and may have wondered at its survival as a nation. Its short history is marked by wars with its neighbours and terrorist attacks, by internal political and religious power struggles. Its Jewish population is divided between those who are purely secular in their outlook and the seemingly fanatical religious beliefs and practices of Orthodox Jews.

The assassination of Yitzhak Rabin in November 1995 exposed the deep divisions within modern Israel and helped to sabotage the so-called peace process between Israel and the Palestinian Arabs under their leader Yasser Arafat. Yes, although the peace process is continuing as we write, Israel is beset with problems, both internally and internationally and there seems to be little prospect of a lasting solution at this point in time.

What is there to celebrate then as Israel approaches its 50th anniversary? The purpose of this special issue of Light is to answer this question from the Bible. The great truth is that God has a plan for this world. The future of Israel is essential to the development of this plan. We believe that the Divine plan is approaching its climax through a series of astounding events which will affect Israel and the whole world. After these events there will indeed be a time of great celebration, not only for Israel but for all nations.

This issue of Light on a New World is divided into five main articles. The first article poses a question. Why did God choose the Jews? The answer to this

question provides the key to our understanding of God's plan. We see in their long history the Divine hand in their affairs. The preservation of this remarkable people for 4,000 years is an astounding testimony to the existence of God. The words of one of their ancient prophets remind us of this:

'Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, that I am God.' *[Isaiah 43.12]*

The next two articles tell us the amazing story of Israel's long history as God's ancient people and miraculous survival both in their ancient land and as a scattered race. We are reminded of the power of God's Word, foretelling all that would befall the Jews from the time of their ancestor Abraham to our days and beyond.

The fourth article focuses our attention on that city of contention - Jerusalem. The eyes of the world are set on this ancient city which was the capital of God's kingdom in the past. The Bible tells us that it will be restored to its former glory and will be the focal point of worship for all nations in the restored kingdom of God. Its king will be none other than the Lord Jesus Christ in fulfilment of the Divine promise to king David. *[2 Samuel 7.12-16; Luke 1.32,33]*

The final article tells us why Israel has nothing really to celebrate now - for its worst fears will soon be realised. The threat of war is ever present and we believe that war in Israel is again inevitable - the peace process will not succeed. However, the Bible links these events with the greatest event in the history of the human race. God will intervene to redeem His people, to re-establish His kingdom and to bring joy and peace to the land and people of Israel. At that time all the world will share in those blessings promised to Abraham the founder of the nation of Israel. *[Genesis 12.1-3; Galatians 3.8]*

Truly this will be a time for celebration!

Editor

# Why did God choose the Jews?

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## GOD MAKES THE CHOICE

WHEREVER WE LIVE in the world we are aware of the countless myriads of stars and planets in the universe. There are estimated to be 100 billion stars in our galaxy. The Andromeda galaxy, two million light years from earth, is said to contain twice the number of stars as are in our galaxy. There are countless other galaxies. The number of stars and planets is so huge we just can't begin to imagine it.

Our planet earth is very small compared with the enormous extent of the universe and the massive size of other planets. Despite this smallness in size God caused this earth to be just right in every way, to sustain life in all its myriad forms. It was God's choice to select this earth. Scientists are not aware of any other planet capable of sustaining life as you and I know it.

The Bible tells us that it was God's choice to create the first human pair, Adam and Eve. The account is properly documented in the book of Genesis. Some 1,650 years after creation the people living on the earth had become so evil, that God decided to bring their lives prematurely to an end. Who hasn't heard of Noah and the flood? Only eight people were found worthy of saving out of the total population at that time. It was God's choice. God alone can decide what to do with His creation. He makes the choice and not only does He make choices, He has always had a plan and purpose for the earth and its human population. The Bible explains this for us.

## WHO ARE THE 'CHOSEN' PEOPLE?

When we talk of the 'chosen' race or nation, many people automatically think of the Jews. At the beginning of the second world war, there were some 18 $\frac{1}{2}$

million Jews living in the world. Today, after the Holocaust that decimated them, it is estimated that out of a world population of six billion there are only some 13 million Jews left. If you went by numbers alone their size is insignificant but numbers aren't important. Just think of our earth; so small and just one of an uncountable number of stars and planets.

We must ask some questions. What was so special about the Jews? What had they done to deserve this 'chosen nation' status? God could have chosen any nation existing at the time that He made His choice – but He didn't! Had they done anything special to deserve the label 'chosen people'? Is it possible for God to change His mind and choose another nation? That begs the question - what other nation would God choose of the many nations in the world?

### THE JEWISH PEOPLE

If it wasn't for God's Word the Bible, we would know little about the history of the Jews. We all know the Jews are spoken of as the 'chosen race'. However, very few people know if this was a self made claim or whether there is truth in the idea that God really did choose them! [*Exodus 4.22; Deuteronomy 4.30-40; 7.2-13; 14.2*]

Sadly, one thing is evident. Nobody today – apart from those who study the Old and New Testaments – can understand God's choice of the Jews. Why them – why not us? Rightly or wrongly generally speaking, they are not widely liked. In fact, the great majority of people, so it would appear, view them as a problem. In almost every newspaper you read, the nation of Israel always seems to be in trouble. It seems as though they just can't do anything right. Some choice! Here we are, fifty years after their birth as a nation and they seem to be in deeper trouble than ever. The Palestinian problem still plagues them; it seems that they cannot solve it to their own and the world's satisfaction.

So where do we go for help in understanding God's choice of the Jews? For students of the Bible, there's only one place to look.

### THE BIBLE

Why look here? Well, first of all it's totally reliable. It deals with the history of the Jews, the nation of Israel and it subjects them to a fair amount of criticism.

The point to note is, that the Bible is God's Word; it is He who controlled what was written there. This means that everything said about the Jews is both true and fair. After all, He is their God! So what does God tell us about these people? For their roots we have to go back into Genesis the first book of the Bible. Here we see the 'root' of God's choice, in His promises to their ancestor Abraham. He was totally trusting towards God and a righteous man from the Divine viewpoint. [James 2.23; Isaiah 41.8; Hebrews 11.8-19]

God said to Abraham:

'...Get thee...unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing...and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed...Lift up now thine eyes...For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land...I will give it unto thee....thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies.' [Genesis 12.1-3; 13.14-17; 22.15-18, see also Genesis 15.5,6; 17.1-8]



'And he (God) brought him (Abraham) forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.' [Genesis 15.5]

We are not going to examine the details of these promises now but you can immediately see how far reaching they were. Importantly, they concerned personal ownership of a vast area of land and a very considerable population. Implicit in these promises is the fact that for Abraham to inherit the promised land, he must first be resurrected from the grave. These promises were repeated to his son and grandson, Isaac and Jacob. [Genesis 26.3-5; 35.9-12] Jacob had his name changed by God to Israel. [Genesis 32.28] The Bible tells us about 'the sons of Israel' who later became known as the 'twelve tribes of Israel'. [Genesis 49.28]

The history of the Jews is fairly well known. It began with times of dreadful famine, as a result of which they eventually settled in Egypt. Due to their rapidly growing population these 'Hebrews' were seen as a threat by the Egyptians, so they enslaved them. Then the Biblical story unfolds, showing us how Moses led the children of Israel (the twelve tribes) out of Egypt. The Plagues and the Passover, their escape through the Red sea and their forty years wandering in the wilderness, are common knowledge, at least to Bible students. The Israelites had lived in Egypt for about 225 years.

The words of God to Moses while Israel were still in Egypt re-enforce the promise to Abraham:

'And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the LORD...say unto the children of Israel, I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians...and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God...And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for an heritage: I am the LORD.' [Exodus 6.2-8]

Three months after escaping from Egypt, under God's protection and after much moaning about their conditions, the children of Israel came into the wilderness of Sinai. The record tells us of God's message to them:

'And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him ...Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel...Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me...an holy nation. And Moses came and called for the elders of the people...And

all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD.' [Exodus 19.3-8, Note the future tense: 'If ye will': 'then ye shall': 'ye shall be']

Those words '**peculiar treasure**' are more easily understood as 'my treasured possession' and help us to see how God viewed this nation. Note the phrase '**holy nation**', which means a nation 'set apart'. They were different from all the nations on earth, (including future nations as well). This was the nation that received the '*Ten Commandments*' from God, [Exodus 20.1-17] the direct descendants of Abraham the Hebrew. The principles laid down at Sinai were to stand the children of Israel in good stead, if only they kept them. It is not our purpose here to spell out whether the children of Israel kept them or not, or to consider their attitude to the great God of heaven who delivered them time after time from their enemies. We suggest that you read Leviticus chapter 26 and Deuteronomy chapter 28, prophetic words which were fulfilled as we see from Israel's subsequent history.

God had made a promise to Abraham and others. God will always be as good as His Word, whether it be to individuals or nations. Have you ever read Ezekiel's prophecies, particularly chapters 37 and 38? You will be fascinated with the reading of prophecy fulfilled and yet to be fulfilled regarding the Jews. One fulfilled prophecy concerns their rebirth as a nation, almost 2,500 years after Ezekiel recorded his God given message. Have you read Jeremiah's prophecies? Look at chapters 30 to 33 which contain these words of God to Israel:

'Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the LORD; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid. For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished.' [Jeremiah 30.10,11]

The Jewish Nation is important to God, above all other nations of the world.

#### GOD'S CONTINUING INTEREST

There are some interesting points here. We suggested earlier that you read

Leviticus chapter 26, Deuteronomy chapter 28 and Ezekiel chapters 37 and 38. Link those words with Jeremiah chapters 30 to 33 and the fact that it is God who causes both the scattering and the re-gathering, is clearly discerned. You can only come to one logical conclusion. God is watching over His people, the children of Israel. God is not allowing them to disappear as a nation. God is ensuring their survival; He has a plan and purpose with them centred in His son Jesus, who himself was a Jew through his mother Mary.

Jeremiah prophesied some wonderful things specifically about the greater son of David (Jesus not Solomon) and the establishment of God's kingdom on this earth:

'Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised...In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David...In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely...' *[Jeremiah 33.14-16]*

If you read the rest of the chapter you will understand just how deeply God is concerned about the promises He has made to this nation. We can link this with our previous quotation where God says that even if He were to destroy all the other nations among which they have been scattered, **He would not destroy the nation and people of Israel.** *[Jeremiah 30.11]*

Can you think of any nation in the world that hasn't had a Jewish presence? Stop and reflect how special this nation, - the Jews, must be to God. They certainly **are** His chosen people. They are precious to Him and it does not matter to God how all the other nations view His choice. God knows best.

Does God care about people who are not Jews? That's a study in itself but bear in mind these words of comfort from the Bible:

'The Lord is...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.' *[2 Peter 3.9]*

We see from these words of the Apostle Peter that the Bible contains a message of hope for all individuals who want salvation. The last article shows how you can share in the promises which God made to Abraham so long ago.

Cyril Nokes  
Hartley, Kent

# The Jews as a Nation

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## THE BIRTH OF THE NATION

THE BIRTH OF Israel as a nation was, like many natural births, a joyful event after a long and difficult labour. They had entered Egypt as one family of about 70 males, headed by Jacob and his twelve sons, with their wives. As they grew in numbers, they came to be seen by the Egyptians as a threat to that country's security. Consequently they were put to slavery, but still increased until they had become a nation of about two million people all told. These consisted of twelve tribes which were the descendants of the twelve sons of Jacob.

The Exodus from Egypt occurred approximately 1,300 BC and no other single modern nation can trace its antiquity back as far with certainty, not even the Egyptians. The modern inhabitants of Egypt are not the descendants of the Egyptians of the Exodus, but are in the main of Semitic origin. While not all historians are agreed on the exact date of the Exodus, they accept that Israel was oppressed while in Egypt and escaped, '*to the accompaniment of events so stupendous that they were impressed forever on her memory.*' [John Bright, *A History of Israel*, SCM Press]. This happened under the leadership of Moses, a towering figure in Israel's history, who was appointed by God and invested with Divine power for that very purpose. Through him, God demanded of Pharaoh king of Egypt, '*Let my people go*' [Exodus 5.1], confirming that they were God's people.

The events are related in detail in the Book of Exodus, where we read how the ten plagues brought Egypt to its knees. The escape of the Hebrews and the

crossing of the Red Sea on dry land, while the pursuing Egyptians were trapped and drowned, are all vividly described here. Only a succession of miracles could have resulted in such an undisciplined band of slaves being able to escape from and defy the most powerful nation on earth at that time; to survive in such great numbers for forty years in a desert environment and go on to take possession of the territory promised to them in God's covenant with Abraham.

### THE LAW OF MOSES

After their escape from Egypt, God brought His people to Mount Sinai where they were given what is described as the '*Law of Moses*'. It was actually God's Law, Moses being only the mouthpiece of God. This was both a civil and religious code of laws, regulating the behaviour of individuals to each other, to the community and their worship of God. During their wanderings in the wilderness, this worship was centred around a portable tabernacle which was erected and dismantled by the Levites as they moved from one place to another. Among the furniture of this tabernacle was the six branched menorah, or lamp stand, (shown below) that has become a symbol of the nation, although the

original has long been lost. The New Testament tells us that both the tabernacle and the animal sacrifices were highly symbolic, pointing forward to the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ.



The Menorah - Symbol of Israel

The '*Law of Moses*' was an astounding piece of legislation, far in advance of anything that the surrounding nations possessed, pointing clearly to its Divine origin and the Creator's purpose that His people should be a holy and righteous nation. The New Testament describes it as '*holy, and just, and good*' [*Romans 7.12*], although, unlike the Law of Christ, it could not of itself bring eternal life. The New Testament also tells us that it was

fulfilled in Christ, and its work was then completed. It therefore no longer has any legal force for the followers of Christ, although as an expression of the mind of God, it still contains many valuable lessons.

It has been fashionable in modern times for critics of the Bible to denigrate the '*Law of Moses*' as being too severe. However people are coming to realise that the '*Law of Moses*' fulfilled a need that modern laws do not, in being 'tough on crime'. We now hear more and more the call for our children to be instructed in the '*Ten Commandments*', to teach them the difference between right and wrong. The '*Ten Commandments*' were the essence of the '*Law of Moses*'. [Exodus 20.1-17; Deuteronomy 5.6-21] It is true that the Law specified '*Eye for eye, tooth for tooth*' [Exodus 21.24] but that was a way of saying that the punishment should fit the crime, an essential requirement of any just law, including that of any country today. However, that did not preclude the exercise of mercy then, any more than do such laws today.

### TOWARDS THE PROMISED LAND

From Sinai, Israel travelled towards the land promised in the covenant that God had made with Abraham. Because of their disobedience and lack of faith, God refused to allow them to enter the land immediately and turned them back into the desert to wander for 40 years, until a whole generation had perished. As they approached the Promised Land for the second time, Moses, by God's inspiration, uttered a remarkable prophecy. He set before them a series of blessings if they remained faithful to God, and a series of curses or tribulations if they forsook God. They did forsake Him, and the calamities which this prophecy foretold have been fulfilled with awe inspiring effect, as the following articles will show. The prophecy can be found in Deuteronomy chapter 28, where we read for example:

'And the LORD shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other...And among these nations shalt thou find no ease... but the LORD shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind: And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life.'  
[Deuteronomy 28.64-66]

These words remind us that the greater the honour God bestows upon a person or nation, the more severe are the consequences when they fail; the greater the height, the heavier the fall. Here is the explanation for the terrible experiences that the Jews have undergone through the ages, down to the appalling events of the Holocaust during the second world war.

### THE OCCUPATION OF THE PROMISED LAND

Moses died at the threshold of entry into the Land and the task of leading the next generation into their inheritance was given to Joshua. We need feel little sympathy for those nations dispossessed by Israel. They were wicked people, steeped in idol worship, even to the extent of sacrificing their children to their gods.

They were also grossly immoral, and Moses had told the Israelites:

'Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.' [Deuteronomy 9.5]

However, Israel never completely drove out these nations, who subsequently proved to be a thorn in the side of God's people, from both a military and political standpoint and in their corrupting influence on Israel's religion and morals.

The next period of Israel's history is called the time of the Judges. After the death of Joshua, there was no national leader for about 150-200 years. The Judges were sometimes local magistrates or governors. This was a time when Israel consolidated her hold on the Holy Land, although it was also a time of great distress as they were harried by these surrounding nations. The epoch was punctuated by periods of anarchy, both political and religious, a time described in words that have become proverbial, when '*there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.*' [Judges 21.25] It terminated when the people demanded of Samuel, the last Judge, that they should have a human king like the nations around them. God acceded to their demand and appointed Saul as their first king.

## THE MONARCHY

It had always been God's purpose that the nation of Israel should eventually have a human king, but this king was to be from the tribe of Judah, as we read in the prophetic blessings of the tribes by Jacob (or Israel), the father of the nation:

‘The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.’ [Genesis 49.10 RSV]

The one intended by God was David, who was of the royal tribe of Judah. At the time of Israel’s demand for a king, he was yet a youth, neither old enough nor experienced enough to take the throne and in the meantime Saul, of the tribe of Benjamin, was appointed king. The demand of the people was therefore premature and it grieved righteous Samuel, but in answer to his prayer, God replied:

‘Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.’ [1 Samuel 8.7]

Here is proof that Israel was God’s kingdom on earth and even when God gave them kings, He still retained overall control and the rulers were said to sit on ‘the throne of the LORD.’ [1 Chronicles 28.5; 29.23]

When Saul was killed in battle with the Philistines, Israel’s arch enemy at that time, David was made king. He was also a great warrior and during his reign, captured Jerusalem, made it his capital city and the kingdom reached the zenith of its power around 1000 BC.

The map shows the extent of the kingdom, compared with the territory promised to Abraham. [Genesis 15.18] It will be seen that Israel never fully occupied the whole of the promised



*Green = Land promised to Abraham  
Blue = Kingdom of David & Solomon*

area. The complete fulfilment of the promise still lies in the future. During the reign of his son Solomon, the kingdom experienced a peace and prosperity that was never again to be equalled during the monarchy. This was a shadow or type of the peace that will be experienced throughout the world in the future kingdom of God upon the earth, as described in Psalm 72.

### GOD'S PROMISE TO DAVID

While David was king in Jerusalem, God made a momentous promise to him which epitomised His purpose centred in the Lord Jesus Christ. The promise was that David would have a 'seed' or descendant who would sit upon his throne over a kingdom that would be established for ever. [*2 Samuel 7.12-16*] That it could not have applied merely to Solomon is apparent for several reasons:

- Solomon's reign did not last for ever, as the promise required. [*verse 13*]
- God was not Solomon's literal father. [*verse 14*]
- God's mercy was taken from Solomon when he was led astray by his many strange wives. [*compare verse 15 with 1 Kings 11.1*]
- The subsequent prophets of Israel recognised that it had still not been fulfilled in their day, when Solomon had long since passed off the scene. [*Isaiah 9.6,7; 11.1-4, where Jesse was the father of David*]

However it is applied in the New Testament to the Lord Jesus Christ. For example, in the announcement of the angel to Mary that she was to have a son and to name him Jesus, we read:

'He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.' [*Luke 1.32,33*]

This is one of several New Testament passages that identify Jesus with the promise to David. (*see also for example, Acts 2.30*) Other passages show that Jesus' kingdom will extend over the whole world, not merely the area of the previous kingdom of Israel. [*Revelation 11.15*]

## THE KINGDOM DIVIDED

After Solomon's death, nine and a half of the tribes of Israel revolted and established a separate northern kingdom. This kingdom became known as the kingdom of Israel, or Ephraim, after the most important tribe and established its capital at Samaria, about 40 miles north of Jerusalem. The remaining two and a half tribes retained the throne of David's descendants, and were known as the kingdom of Judah, with its capital at Jerusalem. The worship of God was centred at Jerusalem and this posed a problem for the rulers of the northern kingdom. They feared that going up to Jerusalem to worship would cause the people to change their allegiance to the house of Judah. Jeroboam, the first ruler of the northern kingdom 'solved' the problem by establishing an alternative idolatrous religion. For this infamous act he was ever afterwards known as '*Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin*', [1 Kings 22.52] although, of course, the people who so blindly obeyed him also bore much of the blame. From this time onwards the history of this northern kingdom was marked by continuous idolatry, until God caused it to be destroyed by the Assyrians 200 years later (the kingdom is then referred to as the ten northern tribes of Israel and the two southern tribes of Judah).

The southern kingdom of Judah lasted for about 330 years after the revolt of the northern tribes, with periods of national godliness led by such kings as Hezekiah and Josiah, interspersed with periods of godlessness. They became increasingly wicked, until that kingdom was also taken into captivity by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar around 586 BC.

Thus while Israel worshipped and served God faithfully, they were blessed with peace and security, but when they disobeyed, although God was very patient with them, the time came when they had to be punished, exactly as Moses had foretold in the prophetic words of Deuteronomy chapter 28.

The next article is about the remarkable survival of the Jews during their long history of dispersion and persecution.

Keith Deadman  
Dudley, West Midlands

## EXCERPTS FROM THE DECLARATION OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL

ERETZ ISRAEL<sup>1</sup> was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and political identity was shaped. Here they first attained to statehood, created cultural values of national and universal significance and gave to the world the eternal Book of Books.

After being forcibly exiled from their land, the people kept faith with it throughout their dispersion and never ceased to pray and hope for their return to it and for the restoration in it of their political freedom.

\* \* \* \* \*

The catastrophe which recently befell the Jewish people—the massacre of millions of Jews in Europe—was another clear demonstration of the urgency of solving the problem of its homelessness by re-establishing in Eretz-Israel the Jewish State, which would open the gates of the homeland wide to every Jew and confer upon the Jewish People the status of a fully privileged member of the community of nations.

\* \* \* \* \*

On the 29th November, 1947, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution calling for the establishment of a Jewish State in Eretz-Israel; the General Assembly required the inhabitants of Eretz-Israel to take such steps as were necessary on their part for the implementation of that resolution. This recognition by the United Nations of the right of the Jewish people to establish their state is irrevocable.

This right is the natural right of the Jewish people to be masters of their own fate, like all other nations, in their own sovereign state.

ACCORDINGLY WE, MEMBERS OF THE PEOPLE'S COUNCIL, REPRESENTATIVES OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF ERETZ-ISRAEL AND OF THE ZIONIST MOVEMENT, ARE HERE ASSEMBLED ON THE DAY OF THE TERMINATION OF THE BRITISH MANDATE OVER ERETZ-ISRAEL AND BY VIRTUE OF OUR NATURAL AND HISTORIC RIGHT AND ON THE STRENGTH OF THE RESOLUTION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY, HEREBY DECLARE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A JEWISH STATE IN ERETZ-ISRAEL, TO BE KNOWN AS THE STATE OF ISRAEL.

\* \* \* \* \*

PLACING OUR TRUST IN THE ALMIGHTY, WE AFFIX OUR SIGNATURES TO THIS PROCLAMATION AT THIS SESSION OF THE PROVISIONAL COUNCIL OF STATE, ON THE SOIL OF THE HOMELAND, IN THE CITY OF TEL-AVIV, ON THIS SABBATH EVE, THE 5<sup>th</sup> DAY OF IYAR, 5708 (14<sup>th</sup> May, 1948).

David Ben-Gurion and members of the Provisional council.

1 *Eretz-Israel* (Hebrew) – the Land of Israel, Palestine.

# The Survival of the Jews

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'All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but the Jew remains. What is the secret of his immortality?'

'You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.' *[Amos 3.2]*

'For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished.' *[Jeremiah 30.11]*

IN THE FIRST of the above quotations we have the thoughts of a human observer of the history of the Jews (American author, Mark Twain in 1899). The second and third show us the mind of God in relation to a people He chose to be His own. Human author and Divine both confirm that in the story of the Jewish people down the ages, we have a remarkable history which demands a remarkable explanation. But whereas the first writer has no explanation, the other writers claim that they have an explanation which was given them by the God of Israel Himself. As we now follow the history of the Jews over some 2,500 years, we shall find that this is the only explanation which fits.

We go back first to the 9th century BC and find that God's people were no longer a united kingdom; to the north lay the kingdom of Israel made up of ten tribes. The remaining two tribes comprised the kingdom of Judah in the south. Nothing good is recorded about the rulers of the northern kingdom and

beginning about the middle of the 9th century BC, God began to punish them by sending against them the mighty armies of the Assyrians from the north. Finally in 722 BC the kingdom of Israel was overrun completely and its king and many of its inhabitants were taken away to Assyria to be replaced by a variety of peoples from other parts of the Assyrian empire. However; by this time there were representatives of all twelve tribes in the southern kingdom. Beginning soon after the division of the kingdom, there were several emigrations south by members of the ten tribes seeking a purer worship of their God. Whatever happened to those taken to Assyria, it is quite wrong to speak of the 'lost' ten tribes of Israel. Representatives of all twelve tribes were to be found in the southern kingdom of Judah.

### THE END OF THE JEWISH KINGDOM

This kingdom continued for another 136 years. Kings like Hezekiah and Josiah tried hard to establish the kingdom on a sound basis of obedience to God's laws but the majority of the people failed to respond and God decreed that this kingdom also should come to an end. The prophet Ezekiel addressed the last king of Judah in these words:

'And thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him.' *[Ezekiel .21.25-27]*

(Note the promise in the last few words of this quotation; we still await its fulfilment).

By now the dominating power of the Middle East was Babylon under its great king Nebuchadnezzar. In 586 BC his armies overran Israel, captured Jerusalem and destroyed its temple. Its king and princes and many of its inhabitants were taken to Babylon. But although, as Ezekiel had said, this was to be the end of the kingdom for the time being, it was certainly not going to be the end of the nation. In 539 BC Babylon fell to the Persians who immediately gave the captive peoples the opportunity to return to their own lands. Many Jews did return, the walls of Jerusalem and the temple were rebuilt but Israel remained a 'puppet state'.

## TEMPORARY REVIVAL

In 330 BC the Persians were overcome by the Greek armies under Alexander the Great but seven years later he died when he was only 33 years old. He had no successor and the empire was divided amongst his generals. The Seleucids in Syria to the north and the Ptolemies in Egypt to the south became the dominant powers and Israel suffered greatly from the conflict between the two dynasties. Matters reached a head during the reign of the Seleucid king, Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) who, from 168 BC, instituted bitter and brutal religious persecution to the extent of introducing pagan sacrifices and prostitution into the temple in Jerusalem. Under the Maccabees the Jews mounted a successful revolt and for a time enjoyed a period of independence and prosperity until they fell under the rising power of Rome. (All this was anticipated so accurately and in such detail by the prophet Daniel that critics have struggled in vain to date his prophecies after these events.)

In 40 BC, under the authority of Rome, Herod the Great was established as king of the Jews (though not recognised as such by God or by His people) and for the next 100 years the Jews were ruled by various members of his family. Despite his efforts to placate the people by building a magnificent temple in Jerusalem, Herod the Great was never forgiven for wiping out the descendants of the Maccabees.

## JESUS' WARNING

It was during the period of the Herods that Jesus lived and went about Israel preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God. The Jews treated him just as they had treated their earlier prophets and Jesus added his words to theirs in warning them of the consequences of their rebellious attitude:

‘And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh...For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.’ [Luke 21. 20-24.]

(Note again the time limit set to the extinction of the kingdom. The words of Jesus here received a terrible fulfilment.)

## THE TRAGEDY OF AD 70

Greatly provoked by the Roman governor, in AD 66 the Jews revolted. Rome dispatched an army of 60,000 men to quell the revolt. As a result of the furious resistance of the Jews, coupled with fanatical dissension amongst themselves, there was great destruction and tremendous loss of life. As the Roman armies swept through the land some 100,000 Jews perished and 40,000 were sent to Rome as slaves. But the terror reached its height in and around Jerusalem. Over a million more Jews died, many of starvation. Large numbers were crucified round the walls of the city. Another 100,000 were taken prisoner and many of these perished in the arenas of Rome.



*The Arch of Titus in Rome, showing the Menorah being carried away as booty by the triumphant Roman soldiers*

Josephus, a Jewish commander at the time who was taken prisoner by the Romans, recorded the events in great detail and remarked that '*God had condemned the whole nation, and turned every course that was taken for their preservation, to their destruction.*' (*Wars of the Jews chapter 13*) The siege ended in AD 70 with the temple being completely destroyed. The prophetic words of Jesus received an awful fulfilment. Some 1,500 years before these events Moses had foretold them in gruesome detail. [*Deuteronomy 28.40-57*]

Despite these horrifying experiences, in AD 132 the Jews, led by Bar Kochba, revolted again. They were ruthlessly dealt with by the Emperor Hadrian. Jews were banned from Jerusalem, which was ploughed as a field, [Micah 3.12] and the whole country almost depopulated of Jews and renamed Syria Palestina.

### THE WANDERING JEW

So began the remarkable story of the Jews in dispersion; a people without a land, a religion without its centre of worship. For nineteen centuries they wandered, hounded from country to country by prejudice and superstition, denied the most basic human rights, forced to live in ghettos in the cities of Europe, subject to periodic attacks and plunder. The catalogue of crimes against the Jews is a terrible indictment of the so-called Christian civilisation of the West. Yet the Jew survived, distinguished by his physical features, his dress, his customs and above all his religion. The Jews remain distinct from their neighbours, a unique people, hated, despised or envied for their sometimes astonishing intellectual and artistic achievements.



*A scene from a Polish Ghetto in the 17th Century. Just one of the nations among which Jews experienced similar persecution and ill treatment.*

No racial minority in the world's history has experienced such persecution over such a long period of time and survived. Where today are the ancient enemies and oppressors of Israel - the Philistines, the Edomites and the Hittites? Where now are the great Empires such as Assyria and Babylon that desolated the Holy Land and oppressed and scattered its people? All have vanished, their passage across the

pages of history marked only by the crumbling monuments of their once great civilisations. Some 3,500 years ago Moses had foretold all this in great detail:

'You will become a thing of horror and an object of scorn and ridicule to all the nations where the LORD will drive you...Among those nations you will find no repose, no resting place for the sole of your foot. There the LORD will give you an anxious mind, eyes weary with longing, and a despairing heart.' [Deuteronomy 28.37,65 NIV]

### THE DARKEST HOUR BEFORE THE DAWN

Yet worse was to come, much worse. Beginning just after the first world war, anti-Semitic feeling increased in Europe. In 1933 Adolf Hitler became German Chancellor. He had been preaching anti-Semitism for many years and now he did not hesitate to use his power to implement his policies. Some 250,000 Jews fled from Germany but by 1941 Hitler's armies had occupied almost the whole of Europe. Jews were taken from all the occupied countries and herded into the concentration camps of Germany and Poland. More than six million Jews perished, many of them in the gas chambers. In all the horrors of Jewish history there had been nothing to compare with this Holocaust.

Again the words of Moses cry out in their awful truth:

'You will live in constant suspense, filled with dread both night and day, never sure of your life. In the morning you will say, "If only it were evening!" and in the evening, "If only it were morning!" - because of the terror that will fill your hearts and the sights that your eyes will see.' [Deuteronomy 28.66,67 NIV]

### REVIVAL AND RESTORATION

Yet there was a light at the end of this darkest tunnel of Jewish history. There was a land waiting to receive them, the land God had promised them 4,000 years earlier. But there were problems.

In 1917 two events occurred which brought Britain into the picture. The British government issued the Balfour declaration stating that it viewed 'with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object.' In the same

year British troops advanced into Palestine, eventually driving out the Turks and entering Jerusalem. In 1922 Britain received a League of Nations mandate to administer Palestine. Over the previous 40 years there had been a trickle of Jews going back to the land and in 1922 there were 84,000 Jews in Palestine. By 1939 this had increased to 450,000. Then Britain, to placate the Arabs, put severe restrictions on further immigration. After the second world war and the Holocaust, there was great pressure to allow more Jews into the land. Britain resisted this pressure, even to the extent of turning back ships laden with Jewish refugees from Europe as they reached the shores of their promised land. Faced with increasing turmoil and bloodshed in Palestine, Britain relinquished its mandate on May 15th. 1948. Israel immediately declared itself an independent state and opened its borders to all Jews for unlimited immigration.

This restoration of the Jews to their land had been anticipated more than 100 years earlier by Bible students on the basis of the words of Israel's prophets:

“The days are coming”, declares the LORD, “when I will plant the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the offspring of men and of animals. Just as I watched over them to uproot and tear down, and to overthrow, destroy and bring disaster, so I will watch over them to build and to plant.” declares the LORD.’ [Jeremiah 31.27,28 NIV]

The prophet Ezekiel anticipated the remarkable development of the land which has taken place under Israeli control:

‘But you, O mountains of Israel, will produce branches and fruit for my people Israel, for they will soon come home. I am concerned for you and will look on you with favour; you will be ploughed and sown, and I will multiply the number of people upon you, even the whole house of Israel.’ [Ezekiel 36.8-10 NIV]

Today there are some 5 million Jews in the land, the majority of which have returned from all parts of the world.

### BATTLE FOR SURVIVAL

When she declared her independence in 1948, Israel's troubles were far from being over. She was immediately attacked by the surrounding Arab countries. Totally lacking in modern weaponry, a few hundred thousand Jews set themselves to resist the onslaught of millions of heavily armed Arabs. Again

Israel survived. It was widely regarded as a miracle; certainly the hand of God was in it. The Arabs continued their provocation of Israel with the declared intention of destroying her. In 1956 the Israelis took matters into their own hands and attacked the Egyptian forces in the Sinai peninsular, driving them back to the Suez canal. In 1967 the Arabs again attacked. By now the Israelis had tanks and aircraft but were outnumbered by Arab forces more than three to one. Yet in six days the Israelis drove the Arabs back, occupying the West bank of the Jordan, including the whole of Jerusalem (for the first time in 1900 years), the Gaza strip and the Sinai peninsular. A further Arab attack in 1973 was no more successful. During the Iraqi attack on Kuwait in 1990/91, Scud missiles were fired at Israel but, under pressure from America, Israel did not respond on this occasion.

In March 1979 a peace treaty was signed between Israel and Egypt and in 1993 agreement was reached in Oslo between Israel and the PLO, paving the way for Palestinian self-rule. This has led to great tensions among the Jews themselves resulting in the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin in November 1995. Both in Israel and among the Arab nations there are powerful forces opposed to any sort of peace agreement. It is not part of our brief to endorse all that Israel has said and done. All we are concerned with, is showing the remarkable survival of the Jews over 2,500 years of troubled history and their even more remarkable revival and return to the land over the last 50 years - the land promised to them by God nearly 4,000 years ago.

As we write, some Arab nations are pressing ahead with the development of longer range missiles and ever more horrifying chemical and biological weapons. The immediate outlook is indeed grim but that is the subject of the concluding article.

### CONCLUSION

We began this article with three quotations; one from an American author seeking the reason for the survival of the Jews despite their troubled history and two from Israel's prophets giving us God's explanation of their immortality. We suggested that as we followed Jewish history over some 2,500 years, we would find that this is the only explanation which fits the facts. We believe we have vindicated that claim as far as is possible in such a brief, concentrated review.

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# Jerusalem : Capital City

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EVERYONE KNOWS JERUSALEM. It is the centre of much interest and controversy in the world press but not everybody knows that Jerusalem is central to God's plan and purpose with the earth as explained in the Bible.

## JERUSALEM IN THE PAST - THE CITY OF DAVID.

The first mention of Jerusalem (the city of peace) in the Bible, is in Joshua [*Joshua 10.1*] but it is generally agreed that '*Salem*' where Abram went to meet the king-priest Melchizedek [*Genesis 14.18*] is the same place. The mountain in '*the land of Moriah*' [*Genesis 22.2*] where Abraham went to offer Isaac as a sacrifice, was also the site of Jerusalem which is built on the four hills Zion, Acra, Moriah and Bezetha. [*see also 2 Chronicles 3.1*]

The significance of these two events which took place at Jerusalem immediately identifies the city as central to God's purpose. Melchizedek, the king-priest of the most high God, broke bread and drank wine with Abraham prefiguring the sacrificial work of Jesus as explained in Hebrews chapter seven. Similarly, the faith shown by Abraham and the willing sacrifice of Isaac established the principle of '*justification through faith*' and demonstrated that God would provide a lamb as a sacrifice. John the Baptist identified Jesus as '*the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*' [*John 1.29*]

That Jerusalem is a special place chosen by God is explained in more detail in the record of the life of David. David went to great lengths to capture the city, fortify it and transfer his throne there. Then he was able to bring the ark of the covenant into the city. Finally, he purchased the temple site and assembled the

materials for his son Solomon to build the temple there. In all of this David was guided by God and we see many parallels between the life of David and that of Christ. Both shed tears over Jerusalem and both were destined to return to Jerusalem in triumph.

When Solomon dedicated the completed temple he explained that God, who made the universe, could not be contained even in the heavens let alone a house.*[1 Kings 8.27]* The temple was the place promised by God where '*The LORD your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there.*' *[Deuteronomy 12.11]*

All prayers made towards this special place would be heard by God. God accepted Solomon's prayer *[1 Kings 9.3]* and repeated the promises made to David *[2 Sam 7.12-16]* to establish his throne for ever. This of course is yet to be fulfilled when Jesus returns to the earth and was confirmed when the promise was repeated to Mary prior to the birth of Christ. *[Luke 1.32]*

### **This all happened at Jerusalem.**

When the temple was completed and the ark was put in the Holy of Holies, the glory of God filled the temple as a cloud. *[1 Kings 8.11]* So we see that Abraham, David and Solomon all recognised that Jerusalem was a special place as it represented the importance of the presence of God in the lives of all who worship the Creator.

All through the Bible Jerusalem takes a central role. It was the capital of the kingdom set up by David and Solomon. It was central to the national identity of Israel when they returned from exile in Babylon to rebuild it. At the time of Christ it was again the centre of worship for the Jews. After the Jews revolted (AD 66–70) the Romans recognised its importance to the Jewish nation so they razed it to the ground in AD 70. For nearly 2,000 years it has been the hope of Israel to return as they eventually did. *[Jeremiah 30.18-20; 31.10-14]*

### **JERUSALEM TODAY - THE CITY OF CONTENTION**

The year 1998 is the 50th anniversary of the State of Israel. Have their hopes now been realised? The answer of course is 'only in part' and that after fighting

for their survival on many occasions in the last 50 years. The land they occupy is only a fraction of that promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. [Genesis 13.14,15] They do not even have the land occupied by Solomon's kingdom. In spite of winning several wars with the surrounding nations they have very little land east of Jordan. They returned the Sinai peninsula to Egypt and the Palestinians have been granted partial self-rule in the West Bank and Gaza Strip areas. They are still surrounded by hostile, mainly Moslem countries, including Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Iraq, Iran and Saudi Arabia.



*Map of Israel showing the adjacent Arab nations around her borders.*

Only in 1967, after the ‘Six Day War’, did Israel gain control of the whole of Jerusalem. It is still a constant cause of contention with the Palestinians who object to Israel extending the settlements to the east of the city into what they consider to be their territory. The presence of the third most holy Islamic shrine ‘the dome of the rock’ on the original temple site and the Jewish reverence of ‘the western (or wailing) wall’, all that remains of the Herodian temple, produce two flash points in the city. Both groups claim Jerusalem as their capital city. No compromise is ever offered on that point. When one realises that Jerusalem is also a centre of worship for Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox and numerous Nonconformist Christian sects and all demand access to their shrines, we see that the result is a ghastly mix of religious fanaticism that only the return of Christ will resolve.

Israel has been in control of Jerusalem since 1967, bringing closer the end of the Gentile times as prophesied by Christ himself:

‘...they (the Jews)...shall be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.’ *[Luke 21.24]*

Jesus included this in the Olivet prophecy which spoke of the time of the end, just prior to his return.

‘Then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.’ *[Luke 21.27]*

He said that not only would the kingdom of God be established at that time but also:

‘...This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled.’ *[Luke 21.32]*

How long is a generation? It is now more than 30 years since Jerusalem came under the control of Israel. Surely the return of Christ is imminent!

In the meantime the mayhem continues with terrorism a constant concern. Any activity such as the archaeological excavations near the temple site is an excuse for more conflict. The words of the prophet Zechariah foretold the outcome:

'...In that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it.' [Zechariah 12.3]

The day that Zechariah referred to here is '*the day of the Lord*' or in other words the day of the return of Jesus Christ. He repeated the phrase many times as he foretold how the Jews will eventually recognise Jesus as their Messiah – '*they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn.*' [Zechariah 12.10] The prophet tells us that God himself will then be in control of Jerusalem:

'...In that day, I (God) will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.' [Zechariah 12.9]

As the days of the last generation pass, we can see that again the city of Jerusalem will be the focal point of the interaction between God and man. This interaction will be destructive for those who know not God but a day of great salvation for the faithful. We do not know exactly what will set off this political powder keg. Only recently Saddam Hussein has challenged the United Nations yet again. The Christian and Islamic extremists in Lebanon, Syria and Iran continue to bait Israel and carry out terrorist attacks. Oppression and atrocities make for implacable hostilities in the whole region.

It seems impossible that the '*City of Peace*' will ever live up to its name, but the Bible clearly states that God is in control and Jerusalem is '*the apple of his eye.*' [Zechariah 2.8]

#### JERUSALEM IN THE FUTURE - THE CITY OF CHRIST

So what does the future hold for Jerusalem? The Bible is full of references to its glorious place in the kingdom of God, which Jesus will establish on his return. To quote just one passage, we read:

'But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her...' [Isaiah 65.18,19]

But the prophets also tell us that Jerusalem will indeed experience a time of great trouble. [Zechariah 14.2,3] Only then will God intervene in the person of Jesus Christ who will stand in that day on the mount of Olives.



The 'Golden Gate' overlooks the Kidron valley towards the Mount of Olives. Sealed up since AD 810, it is by tradition to remain closed until Messiah enters the city at his coming.

A huge earthquake will ensue and Jerusalem will then be elevated above the surrounding hills. [Zechariah 14.4-10] After the destruction and rebuilding of both the geographical and national boundaries, Jerusalem the city, will really become a city of peace and Jesus, the 'Prince of Peace' will reign there. It will be 'safely inhabited' as Zechariah puts it. [Zechariah 14.11]

The prophet Ezekiel describes in detail the building of the new temple in Jerusalem. [Ezekiel chapters 40-47] People from all over the world will travel to Jerusalem to worship there in recognition of its unique position as the meeting place chosen by God and where Christ the King, the one mediator between God and man will have his throne. [Zechariah 14.16]

'And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.'

[*Micah 4.2*]

Jesus will then be King of Kings on the throne of David in Jerusalem as the angel Gabriel told Mary.*[Luke 1.32]* His reign, together with the saints, will last for a thousand years.

**This is the destiny of Jerusalem.**

Let everyone pray with the Psalmist for '*the peace of Jerusalem.*'*[Psalm 122.6]*

Richard Griffiths  
Loddon, Norfolk

## **COVER PICTURE**

The nation of Israel is a remarkable proof to the world at large of the veracity of the Scriptures. It must be remembered that they contain the history of this race, recording the events that have surrounded the people chosen by God to be His witnesses.

For almost 6,000 years, the record has stood as a witness to the truth of God's existence and power. It has been the source of our knowledge of God and His purpose. Also it has provided to every generation, an understanding of the Divine purpose which when fulfilled, can embrace every man and woman who has taken the opportunity to seek it out.

This special issue of Light is intended to set out the veracity of God's Word, whilst drawing attention to the nearness of the return of Christ.

The cover picture has been produced on a background of the Western (or Wailing) wall of the temple in Jerusalem. It shows a montage of both Biblical events and archaeological discoveries peculiar to Israel, superimposed upon it. This was commissioned by Light on a New World in celebration of Israel's 50 years as a nation in the land.

The pictures in order from left to right are:

The cultivation of a barren land.

The Knesset-seat of Israel's parliament.

The Star of David.

Pictorial view of Jerusalem, Israel's capital city.

An ancient scroll of the Pentateuch, the books of Moses.

The Shrine of the Book which houses the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The Menorah-the six branched candlestick.

The declaration of the State of Israel on 14th May 1948 by David Ben Gurion.

### **Acknowledgement.**

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Graphics and design by Emma Perfitt, Poringland, Norfolk.

# The Future for Israel

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## THE 50th ANNIVERSARY

IT IS NOW 50 years since the State of Israel was declared and since that time Israel has consolidated its position, controlling the whole of Jerusalem for the first time in 2,500 years. She has made it her capital and has declared that she will never give it up. Israel's wars with the Arab nations have brought her victory and have gained back for her much of the land which she lost.

From being dispersed throughout the world, the Jews now have a permanent base, even the land promised to their fathers, in fulfilment of Bible prophecies so many years ago, which foretold their re-gathering to their own land:

'But ye, O mountains of Israel, ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to my people of Israel; for they are at hand to come. For, behold, I am for you, and I will turn unto you, and ye shall be tilled and sown: and I will multiply men upon you, all the house of Israel, even all of it: and the cities shall be inhabited, and the wastes shall be builded.' *[Ezekiel 36.8-10]*

In some measure we have seen this prophecy fulfilled, with Israel now established in their land for 50 years. The former waste places have indeed been turned to places of fruitfulness.

The land of Israel has been transformed over the last 50 years from desert and desolation, to a flourishing powerful country, with substantial military might and nuclear capability. The national resurrection of Israel was of course, foretold by the prophets of God and Ezekiel chapter 37 gives us a picture of a valley of dry bones, representing the house of Israel, being resurrected and given life. In some

measure this is what we have seen over the last 50 years, as the people of Israel, for many centuries as dead as those dry bones, have again been constituted a nation in their land.



*The settlement of Kinneret today on the Sea of Galilee, illustrating the lush cultivated land transformed from wasteland of centuries.*

But the ancient prophecies of the restoration of Israel call for something more:

- The coming of their Messiah
- The turning of their hearts back to God

Israel as a people and a nation, are today generally speaking godless in their attitude and way of life. On the one hand they rely on God's promises to their fathers, which constituted them His chosen people, yet in their way of life they deny God and rely on their own power. A means has to be found to alter this situation and again the prophets of God fill in the details of what is to happen to them shortly.

The prophecy of Ezekiel chapter 37 is quite clear that God's people must yet recognise Him truly as their God:

'...O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the LORD.' *[Ezekiel 37.12,13]*

What is to change their attitude of mind so that they will recognise the hand of God in their affairs?

### THE COMING CONFLICT

The Old Testament prophets foretold that there is to be a final conflict in the Middle East, with Israel right in the middle of it. Ezekiel chapter 38, shows us a picture of a power from the north coming against Israel when they are back in their land. It describes a great army being drawn by God himself and led by a powerful leader named Gog, which is, we believe Russia. They will come against Israel, a land now inhabited by the Jews, a people brought back from captivity. *[Ezekiel 38.1-4,8]* This confederacy of nations has with it a number of distinct countries which figure in today's Middle East problem comprising mainly the Arab nations. In Ezekiel chapter 38 we find a list of them, including Persia (now Iran and parts of Iraq), Ethiopia and Libya. They will be assisted by a number of other countries which are described in the prophecy. *[Ezekiel 38.5,6]*

These nations will be forced to come up by God against Israel to take a spoil and to take a prey, to turn their hand against the mountains of Israel, and against the desolate places now inhabited by the Jews who have been gathered out of the nations. *[Ezekiel 38.8-12]* The chapter goes on to show that this event will bring upon these nations the wrath of God, and in His fury He will fight for His people, with pestilence and blood, with an overflowing rain, and with great hailstones, fire and brimstone. By this means the enemy will be defeated, and God will magnify Himself in the sight of many nations. *[Ezekiel 38.18-23]*

The prophet Zechariah, speaks of **all** nations being brought into battle at Jerusalem, taking the city, and subjecting its inhabitants to a great slaughter. These events are described as follows:

'Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished ...' [Zechariah 14.1,2]

The scenes depicted in this chapter show Israel utterly defeated, until the sequence of events occurs which saves them from total annihilation:

'Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives...and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.' [Zechariah 14.3-5]

If you read this chapter in Zechariah you will notice that God smites the nations with a great plague, and the rescued remnant of Israel will then fight alongside their Messiah to overcome the nations gathered against them.



A view across the ruins of Megiddo, or 'Har-Megiddon', from which Armageddon, the battle site of all battle sites, is named.

The last book of the Bible gives another picture of this conflict, using a name that over the past few years has become synonymous with the end of the world as we know it:

'And he (God) gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.' [Revelation 16.16]

The view that this battle is descriptive of the end of the world has no foundation in the Scriptures. This popular idea originated from a question addressed to Jesus by his disciples.

The question was this:

'And as he (Jesus) sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what [shall be] the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"' [Matthew 24.3]

The Greek word 'Aion' translated 'world' should be rendered correctly as '**age**'. The sense of the passage then harmonises with the many other scriptural statements concerning the conflict that is to overtake Israel immediately prior to the return of Jesus in the 'latter days.'

Jesus taught that his return was to herald the Millennium, a period of peace and prosperity. For the world to end when he returns would totally contradict what he was saying. This is obvious from his answer which follows their question to him in Matthew chapter 24.

### THE RETURN OF CHRIST

Israel's long promised Messiah, or Christ, the anointed one of God, is to return as promised. After leading Israel in their defeat of the nations, they will accept him as their Messiah. The prophet Zechariah wrote:

'In that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem;... And it shall come to pass...that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn.' [Zechariah 12.8-10]

Yes, Israel will accept Christ as their Messiah and their king, who has delivered them, and he will establish the kingdom of God upon the earth. The kingdom was promised even before he was born, as his mother Mary was told by the angel Gabriel. The Lord God would give to Jesus the throne of his father David, he would reign over the house of Jacob for ever and of his kingdom there would be no end. *[Luke 1.32,33]* That kingdom was preached extensively by Jesus during his ministry. No longer will his followers have to ask him, as they did after his resurrection '*Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?*' *[Acts 1.6]* He then **will** restore God's people as the head of the nations and will through Israel, fulfil the promises which God made to Abraham 4,000 years ago, that his descendants would possess their land for ever and have pre-eminence above all nations.

### THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE KINGDOM

The Bible shows that the establishment of this Kingdom will not be by peaceful means, as we have seen and Psalm two gives another picture of the kings of the earth opposing Christ when he sets up the Kingdom.

But God issues the decree:

'Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen (nations) for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.' *[Psalm 2.6-9]*

In the prophecy of Daniel, which was given at the beginning of the Babylonian captivity, about 600 BC, we are shown a picture of the kingdoms of men being broken up and destroyed by the kingdom of God:

'And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.' *[Daniel 2.44]*

When these prophecies are fulfilled and the nations are subdued and with Israel recognising that Christ is their Messiah, God's law will go forth from Jerusalem, from the restored throne of David, then occupied by his greater son the Lord Jesus Christ.

The prophet Isaiah shows us a vision of this time of blessing for the world:

'And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.' *[Isaiah 2.2-4]*

### THE MILLENNIUM

From these quotations it can be seen that the centre of the kingdom of God will be Jerusalem, and all the world will be governed by a righteous ruler. In this work he will be assisted by the saints, the redeemed of all ages. *[Isaiah 51.11; Revelation 20.6]* Isaiah chapter 32 and Psalm 72 together give a fuller picture of this scene, and you are urged to read these prophetic word pictures, for they speak of an earth totally transformed.

The Bible shows that this transformation of the earth will take place during the reign of Christ and the saints. This period of peaceful rule over the earth is known as the millennium. As we today think of the rapidly approaching end of the present millennium, God is holding out the prospect of a new millennium, bringing peace and blessings to the whole earth. Long life will be the order of the day and the nations will learn to live together in righteousness and peace. God will bless His creation with plenty, disease will be overcome and at the end of the new millennium, sin and death will be abolished. The earth will then be populated by glorious immortal beings.

## THE CHOSEN PEOPLE AND YOU

In this series of articles much has been said about the nation of Israel and their place in the purpose of God. But in the Bible there is also an invitation to all mankind to become associated with the Divine plan. We can be related to God's promise through belief in His Word and through baptism into the saving name of Christ.

Paul told the baptised believers in Galatia:

'For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek (Gentile), there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.' *[Galatians 3.26-29]*

There is an important message here for all our readers. If you become Christ's, you too can be one of God's chosen people. The Apostle Paul explains in this passage that those who are Christ's are '*Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*' Abraham was promised an inheritance in the land of promise - in God's land - in the land which is now the focus of Israel's so-called celebrations. You can share that promise too - but there are conditions as the passage in Galatians tells us.

Did you notice the two key words - '**faith**' (or belief) followed by '**baptism?**' We urge you to look further into these things, to see what God requires and to respond to His gracious offer of Salvation. Jesus said '*Salvation is of the Jews*'. How true these words are. The Divine plan for the future of Israel is certain.

How certain is **your** future?

Clive Brooks  
Horsham, Sussex

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